

IV. Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-25 and 50-73 are pending, with Claims 1, 26, 42, 50 and 71 being independent. Claims 26-49 have been withdrawn. Applicants reserve the right to file one or more divisional applications for the subject matter of these withdrawn claims.

Applicants have amended Claim 1 of the present application to clarify that the channel has a first section and a second section, the first section having a narrower width than the second section. Further, the amendment clarifies that the first section has disposed therein one of a male portion or a female portion of a releasably engageable male-female trim cover attachment system. A foam pad having a channel with at least two sections of different width is shown, for example, in Figure 10 of the present application. Claims 6 and 9 have been amended to correct obvious typographical errors. Claim 19 has been amended to depend from Claim 17. Claims 21 and 22 have been amended to overcome a formal objection raised by the Examiner. Applicants submit that all amendments presented herein are being made for reasons of clarity with respect to the specification and drawings, and not for reasons relating to the statutory requirements for patentability.

Claims 50-73 have been newly added to provide Applicants with an additional scope of protection commensurate with the disclosure. Claim 50 is substantively similar to the combination of old Claims 1, 5 and 6, with further clarification that the surface of the foam pad has molded therein an open channel. New dependent

Claims 51-70 are substantively the same as various of original dependent Claims 2-25. New Claim 71 combines features of amended Claim 1 and new Claim 50, with further clarifications that the surface of the foam pad has molded therein an open channel, that a plurality of female portions is disposed in the first section of the open channel and that the base portion of the female portion is molded into the foam pad. New Claims 72 and 73 are substantively similar to original Claims 24 and 25.

It is believed that no new subject matter has been added.

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner required affirmation of the election of Claims 1-25 for further prosecution. Applicants hereby affirm the election, with traverse. Traversal is on the grounds that the burden on the Examiner/Patent Office to examine the groups of claims in a single application is less than the burden on Applicants/the public to prosecute/search more than one application/patent. Applicants respectfully request that the restriction requirement be withdrawn and all groups of claims be examined together.

Claims 21 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 (second paragraph), as being indefinite, for containing improper Markush language. These claims have been amended to replace the term “comprising” with the term “consisting of” as suggested in the Office Action. Applicants therefore request that the rejection of Claims 21 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. §112 (second paragraph) be withdrawn.

In Paragraph 7 of the Office Action, Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,443,525 [Haupt]. This rejection is traversed. Reconsideration is requested in light of the following remarks.

Claim 1 has been amended herein to clarify that the channel disposed in the surface of the foam pad has a first section and a second section, the first section having a narrower width than the second section. Further, the male portion or female portion of the trim cover attachment system is disposed in this narrower first section of the channel. As shown in Figures 8-11 and described in Paragraphs 34-39 of the present application, this feature allows for production of a foam part with a narrow trench, even narrower in the region of the trench where the trim cover is to be attached to the foam pad. This relative narrowing allows for self-alignment of the trim cover with respect to the attachment point in the foam pad.

With reference to Haupt, it should be noted that the trench (20) in Haupt has a constant width. This renders the approach of Haupt not particularly useful, especially in the situation where the female portion of a mechanical clip is disposed in the trench of the foam pad (see new Claims 50 and 71 of the present application). With reference to Claims 50 and 71 of the present application, the subject matter of these claims is further distinct from Haupt by virtue of reciting the presence of a female attachment portion in the channel.

In Haupt, a so-called touch fastening system is used and there is no teaching or suggestion of using a female attachment portion of a male-female trim cover attachment system.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the subject matter of Claims 1-16 is not disclosed or suggested by Haupt. Applicants therefore request reconsideration and

withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Haupt.

It is believed that the various rejections set out in Paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Office Action have been overcome in view of the comments made above concerning the rejection of Claims 1-16 based on Haupt.

In Paragraph 10 of the Office Action, Claims 1-22, 24 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,641,552 [Tillner]. This rejection is traversed. Reconsideration is requested in light of the following remarks.

As mentioned above, Claim 1 now recites the presence of a channel having a first section and a second section, the first section having a narrower width than the second section. Further, the first section has disposed therein one of the male portion or the female portion of the releasably engageable male-female trim cover attachment system. The advantages of this feature were discussed above. Clearly, Tillner fails to disclose or suggest in Figure 3 or elsewhere an “insertion gap” having the variable width referred to above. As stated above, this feature allows for self-alignment of the trim cover during attachment to the foam pad. Accordingly, for the same reasons described above with respect to Haupt, it is believed that Claim 1, as amended herein, defines subject matter which is patentably distinct over Tillner. Applicants therefore request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1-22, 24 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tillner.

It is believed that the rejection in Paragraph 11 of the Office Action has been overcome in view of the comments made above concerning the rejection of Claims 1-22, 24, and 25 based on Tillner.

In Paragraph 12 of the Office Action, Claims 1-8, 10, 11 and 17-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,942,177 [Banfield]. This rejection is traversed. Reconsideration is requested in light of the following remarks.

Banfield is not relevant to Claim 1 as amended herein. Banfield clearly fails to teach or suggest a variable width channel in the surface of the foam pad as discussed above. Further, Banfield fails to teach or suggest any of the advantages of such a variable width channel. As was acknowledged in Paragraph 12, Banfield does not specifically disclose the width of a channel. With this shortcoming, there can be no controversy that Banfield fails to teach or suggest a variable width channel as described above.

Applicants therefore request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1-8, 10, 11 and 17-25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over Banfield.

With regard to new Claims 50-73, Applicants note that independent Claims 50 and 71 recite a foam pad, where the surface has molded therein an open channel. This molded open channel may be achieved using a mold incorporating a rail such as that shown in Figures 6-8 of the present application.

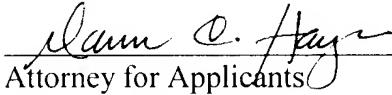
None of the prior art of record describe the formation of such an open channel having disposed therein at least one female portion of a releasably engageable

male-female trim cover attachment system, the female portion comprising a female attachment portion and a base portion. For these reasons, it is believed that new Claims 50-73 are patentably distinguishable over the art of record.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice thereof is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 625-3500. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,



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